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PAGE 01 TOKYO 01940 140918Z

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS; MARR, JA

SUBJECT: CHANGES IN AIR FORCE PACIFIC STRUCTURE

REF: STATE 29477

DEPARTMENT PASS DESIRED

1, EMBASSY APPRECIATES OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON PROPOSED CHANGES IN AIR FORCE ORGANIZATION. OUR ABILITY TO COMMENT IS, HOWEVER, LIMITED TO SOME DEGREE BY LACK OF INFORMATION ON TWO RELATED QUESTIONS; (1) FEASIBILITY OF RETAINING SOME TYPE OF COMMAND IN JAPAN NOT SUBORDINATE TO COMMANDS ELSEWHERE IN REGION AND, (2) RELATIONSHIP TO CHANGES IN OVERALL PACIFIC COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WE UNDERSTAND ARE UNDER CONSIDERATION AS WELL.

2. FROM REFTEL AND WHAT WE HAVE PICKED UP HERE, EMBASSY ASSUMES THAT SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN COMMAND STRUCTURE AND EVEN FORCE STRUCTURE AND LEVELS ARE INEVITABLE AND THAT JAPAN FACTORS WILL PLAY ONLY MARGINAL ROLE IN THESE DECISIONS. HOWEVER, ASSUMING FURTHER THAT CHANGES WILL CONTINUE TO BE EVOLUTIONARY, EMBASSY BELIEVES AS A GENERAL MATTER THESE CHANGES WILL BE MANAGEABLE IN JAPAN PROVIDED WE ARE GIVEN ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITY TO LAY THE NECESSARY GROUNDWORK WITH GOJ. WHAT WE NEED MOST OF ALL IS TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE A TIMELY EXPLANATION OF THESE

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PAGE 02 TOKYO 01940 140918Z

CHANGES, NOT ON A PIECE MEAL, SERVICE-BY SERVICE BASIS, BUT

WITHIN AN OVERALL FRAMEWORK WHICH PROVIDES A SENSIBLE AND HOPEFULLY CONVINCING RATIONALE FOR OUR CHANGES.

3. WITHOUT SUCH AN EXPLANATION, PROPOSED CHANGES AND OTHERS NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION WILL RAISE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS ABOUT LONG-RANGE US SECURITY INTENTIONS IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC. BY AND LARGE THE GOJ HAS ACCEPTED THE NEED FOR CHANGE AND HAS ACCOMMODATED WITHOUT GREAT FUSS TO THE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED SUCH AS RIFTS, REALIGNMENTS AND CONSOLIDATIONS. THEY HAVE, HOWEVER, SHOWN INCREASING CONCERN ABOUT THE BROADER IMPLICATIONS OF THIS PROCESS. AT SOME POINT, THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF THESE CHANGES, EACH PERHAPS ACCEPTABLE IN ISOLATION, WILL TOUCH ON THE BASIC QUESTION OF US ABILITY TO MEET ITS COMMITMENTS. EVEN WITHOUT REFERENCE TO OTHER CHANGES UNDER CONSIDERATION, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PROPOSED SHIFT IN AIR FORCE COMMAND TO THE PHILIPPINES WILL RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT KOREA WHERE, AS WE AND THE GOJ UNDERSTAND IT, US AIR POWER REPRESENTS THE MOST IMPORTANT U.S. MILITARY REINFORCEMENT CAPABILITY.

4. THE EMBASSY EMPHASIZES THE NEED TO INTEGRATE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOJ OF THE PROPOSED AIR FORCE CHANGE INTO A BROADER DISCUSSION OF THE VARIOUS OTHER CHANGES IN COMMAND AND FORCE STRUCTURE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH THE EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS ARE UNDER CONSIDERATION (OR ALREADY IN PROCESS). THE ARMY HAS ALREADY SHRUNK CONSIDERABLY AND WE UNDERSTAND FURTHER DRAMATIC REDUCTIONS ARE LIKELY. THE NAVY IS CONSIDERING SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES AT SASEBO. THE MARINES ARE SAID TO BE CONSIDERING CUTS AT IWAKUNI AND OKINAWA. WE UNDERSTAND THAT A REGROUPING OF WESTPAC FORCES INTO TWO NEW GROUPINGS IS UNDER CONSIDERATION: A NORTHEAST ASIA COMMAND CENTERED IN KOREA AND A SOUTHEAST ASIA COMMAND IN THE PHILIPPINES. WE MUST BE ABLE TO ADDRESS THESE CHANGES AS A WHOLE IF WE ARE TO HAVE ANY HOPE OF MEETING OUR CONCERNS NOTED IN PARA 3.

5. THE PROPOSED SHIFT OF COMMAND TO THE PHILIPPINES WILL RAISE SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN JAPAN. THE GOJ WILL VIEW THE CLOSURE OF A MAJOR US AIR FORCE COMMAND IN JAPAN WHILE RETAINING A SIMILAR HEADQUARTERS IN THE PHILIPPINES AS EVIDENCE OF US DOWNGRADING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF JAPAN AND NORTHEAST ASIA IN FAVOR OF AN AREA OUTSIDE JAPAN'S OWN PRIME

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 TOKYO 01940 140918Z

AREA OF INTEREST. THE GOJ WILL ALSO BE CONCERNED THAT CONTROL OF US AIR FORCE COMBAT FORCES IN JAPAN WILL BE ASSUMED BY HEADQUARTERS WHOSE AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY EXTENDS INTO SOUTHEAST ASIA. THE GOJ HAS ALWAYS BEEN PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF JAPAN-BASED US FORCES IN OTHER AREAS. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE DEFINITION OF QTE FAR EAST UNQTE AS USED IN THE SECURITY TREATY HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST SENSITIVE CONCERNS OVER THE YEARS. WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RETAIN SOME

MEASURE OF FLEXIBILITY BY AVOIDING ATTEMPTS TO DEFINE THE TERM PRECISELY BUT THE PROPOSED CHANGE WILL PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO REOPEN THIS QUESTION WITH GREAT PRESSURE ON THE GOJ TO DEFINE THE QTE FAR EAST UNQTE AREA RESTRICTIVELY.

6. THE APPEARANCE OF DOWNGRADING WILL BE AGGRAVATED BY ELIMINATION OF FIFTH AIR FORCE HQTRS DESIGNATION. THE CHANGE FROM INDEPENDENT AIR FORCE TO SUBORDINATE AIR DIVISION WILL ENHANCE THE APPEARANCE OF ABRUPT AND DRAMATIC CHANGE, SERIOUSLY WEAKENING OUR ABILITY TO CONVEY THE IMPRESSION OF AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS.

7. EMBASSY APPRECIATES REFTEL ASSURANCE THAT PROPOSED ACTIONS WILL NOT IMPINGE ON YOKOTA RELOCATION PLAN (KPCP). RETENTION OF A COMMAND ELEMENT AT YOKOTA AND RELOCATION FROM KADENA OF ONE C-13 SQUADRON SHOULD HELP ON THIS COUNT, BUT WE WILL NEED TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE A FULL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF THIS AND OTHER MILITARY SERVICE CHANGES ON OUR BASE REQUIREMENTS AND ON OUR CONSOLIDATION AND RELOCATION PLANS THROUGHOUT JAPAN. THE GOJ IS AWARE THAT REQUIREMENTS ARE CHANGING AND UNDERSTANDS, AT LEAST IN PART, THE DRIVING FORCES. THIS PERCEPTION IS PROBABLY RESPONSIBLE IN PART FOR APPARENT GOJ RELUCTANCE TO MOVE AHEAD WITH PROGRAMS SUCH AS THE OKINAWA BASE CONSOLIDATION PLAN (OBCP) SUCH A STANCE IS UNDERSTANDABLE, AND WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THE PACE OF CHANGE MAY LEAVE BOTH USG AND GOJ DEFENDING OUTDATED POSITIONS.

8. EMBASSY IS ALSO CONCERNED THAT ADEQUATE ATTENTION BE GIVEN TO ASSURING THAT CHANGE DOES NOT REDUCE USFJ ABILITY TO CARRY OUT ITS IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITIES. FIFTH AIR FORCE PROVIDES SIGNIFICANT TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO COMUSJ AND WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THIS NOT BE OVERLOOKED IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE ESSENTIALLY SERVICE APPROACH TO REORGANIZATION.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 TOKYO 01940 140918Z

9. IN SHORT, EMBASSY MAKES FOLLOWING COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. PROCEDURALLY, OUR PRIMARY NEED IS FOR TIMELY, SUBSTANTIVE CONSULTATIONS

WITH THE GOJ ON THE FULL RANGE OF CHANGE NOW IN PROCESS. THE CREDIBILITY OF OUR CONSULTATIVE ARRANGEMENTS AND PERHAPS EVEN OUR COMMITMENTS ARE AT STAKE.

B. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THOROUGH CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WOULD NOT RPT NOT SUBORDINATE US AIR FORCE UNITS IN JAPAN TO HEADQUARTERS ELSEWHERE IN REGION.

C. EMBASSY WOULD PREFER THAT FIFTH AIR FORCE BE RETAINED AS DESIGNATION FOR WHATEVER AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS IS RETAINED AT YOKOTA. IF THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE, STRONGLY

RECOMMEND SOME OTHER DESIGNATION, E.G. COMMANDER US AIR FORCE
JAPAN, WHICH WOULD RETAIN IN SOME DEGREE THE IMAGE OF A MAJOR
RESIDENT COMMAND OVER AIR UNITS IN JAPAN.
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